



News Release

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Back to School With Asthma: *2008 Utah Youth Asthma Report Has Tips to Help Students*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – A new Utah Department of Health (UDOH) report outlines the impact of asthma on children as they head back to school this fall. The *Utah Youth Asthma Report* shows that 8.9% - or about 76,000 – children in Utah ages 0 to 17 are currently under medical care for asthma. It also details the total numbers of emergency room visits and hospitalizations due to serious asthma events among children.

“One unique aspect of this report is that much of the information is from Utah students who have asthma,” says Becca Jorgensen of the UDOH Asthma Program. “We’re getting insight into how the disease affects them from their personal experiences and points of view.”

Sections of the report focus on middle- and high school-age students and how asthma impacts their participation in school activities. One in five (20.5%) middle school students with asthma reports the disease limits their activities at least once a week, and 22.5% say they miss school one or more days a month with a severe episode.

Among high school students with asthma, 17.2% percent report activity limitation and 15.6% report missing school because of their asthma. “Students with asthma shouldn’t be on the sidelines when it comes to participating in school activities,” said Jorgensen. “With the right treatment, students with asthma can stay active just like anyone else.”

While there is no cure for asthma, if it’s managed properly, children can join in school activities. Families should talk about their students’ difficulties with their physicians and work with them to manage symptoms.

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Page 2 of 2 - Back to School With Asthma

UDOH asthma experts encourage parents, schools, and children with asthma to take preventive measures for a smooth transition as students head back to class:

1. Complete a Self-Administration form and turn it in to the School Nurse or office. The form allows children who are capable to carry and use their inhalers at school.
2. Ask your doctor for a written Asthma Action Plan – an individual guide that indicates what things to avoid and what to do in an emergency or during an asthma attack.
3. Encourage your student's PE teachers and coaches to complete the "Winning with Asthma" online educational program at www.WinningWithAsthma.org.
4. Check your child's medical charts to ensure their flu shots are up-to-date.

Asthma is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism for children in the United States and often causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing that can interrupt daily life.

For more information about asthma and for the full *Utah Youth Asthma Report*, visit <http://health.utah.gov/asthma/> or call 1-888-222-2542.

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